DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 302 355 RC 016 874

TITLE	End of the Road: Rural America's Poor Students and Poor Schools. National Rural, Small Schools Task Force Report to the Regional Educational Laboratories.
INSTITUTION	Council for Educational Development and Research, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	May 88
NOTE	77p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Viewpoints (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Demonstration Programs; *Economically Disadvantaged; Educational Innovation; *Educationally Disadvantaged; Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Aid; Profiles; Regional Laboratories; *Rural Schools; *School Districts; *Small Schools
IDENTIFIERS	National Rural Small Schools Task Force; Promising Practices; *Regional Educational Laboratories; Small School Districts

ABSTRACT

Across the nation, more than 2.2 million children attend 2,750 rural school districts that suffer from chronic, severe poverty. The National Rural Small Schools Task Force oversees nine regional educational laboratories as they identify and develop promising educational practices for rural, small schools. One laboratory developed a data base containing size, rurality, and income data for all U.S. school districts, and per pupil expenditure and student achievement data for districts in 17 states. Analysis of the 17-state sample showed that 49% of its school districts (2,587) were both small and rural, and 28% of these (717) ranked in the bottom quarter of districts in their state on at least two of three indicators: family wealth, per pupil expenditure, and student achievement. By adding large rural districts and projecting analyses to all 50 states, this report estimates that 2,750 U.S. rural school districts are chronically poor. During the first year of the rural small schools initiative, the laboratories developed or identified 39 promising practices for improving rural schools. Generally, these practices help schools solve their own problems, help policymakers make sound decisions, and install proven ideas in schools and communities. This report contains: (1) Task Force recommendations to the laboratories for second year activities and future funding possibilities; (2) data on poor rural school districts in Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Oregon, and West Virginia; and (3) the purpose, description, key features, results, and sites of the 39 promising educational practices. (SV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED302355

END OF THE ROAD

RURAL AMERICA'S POOR STUDENTS AND POOR SCHOOLS

NATIONAL RURAL, SMALL SCHOOLS TASK FORCE REPORT TO THE REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORIES

RC016874

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

ISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E. Joseph Schneider

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Task Force Reviews Labs' Rural Education Initiative, Hears about Future Plans

The Problem 5

The Forgotten Population-- Rural America's Poor Children And Their Poor Schools

Findings 19

Laboratories Identify 39 Promising Practices For Improving Rural Schools

Recommendations 23

Laboratories Told To Spread Exemplary Practices; Tackle Rural Schools' Number One Problem

Appendix 26

- o Listing of Task Force Members
- o Map of Laboratory Regions
- o Listing of Regional Laboratories
- o Description of Promising Practices
- o Rural Assistance Program Authorization

INTRODUCTION

Task Force Reviews Labs' Rural Education Initiative, Hears About Future Plans

The National Rural, Small Schools Task Force has been in business for two years. During that time we have held four multi-day sessions. The first, in rural Florida, enabled us to get acquainted with one another and our charge: help the regional educational laboratories satisfy a congressional mandate to identify and develop promising educational practices for rural, small schools.

Our second and third meetings were in Washington, D.C. The first was structured to enable other associations, agencies, and organizations to share their views about the status of rural, small schools. That meeting also gave us an opportunity to receive and discuss the results of a national survey of rural education. The meeting molded our thinking and guided the laboratories as they began planning for their initiative.

The next Washington, D.C., meeting enabled the laboratories to present for our consideration a preview of their proposed scopes of work. These proposals,

shaped by our feedback, went to the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. The laboratories' actual work began in September, 1987, with the start of the school year.

We might have gone out of business at that point, except the Congress extended the program into a second year. That decision gave us an opportunity to accomplish two additional tasks. We were able to review the labs' first-year work and comment on their plans for a second. As important, we had an opportunity to learn a great deal more about what had surfaced as the number-one problem facing rural educators and policymakers -- educating children from low-income families.

The Task Force convened its fourth meeting in Austin, Texas, April 19-20, 1988. We heard reports from the laboratories about the promising practices they were identifying and developing. A total of 39 such practices were presented (See "Task Force Findings" for a discussion of the practices and the Appendix for a listing of them). We also examined what many of the Task Force members began referring to as "the forgotten population," the poor children attending poor schools in Rural America.

The task of educating at-risk students challenges educators in all kinds of schools, regardless of size or location. We wanted to know what makes this problem particularly perplexing for rural schools.

Steve Nelson and Robert Rath of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory made the case to us on behalf of all the laboratories. Their data reveal that some rural schools suffer from chronic, severe burdens across multiple indicators (See "Magnitude of the Problem"). Such schools have a significant portion of their students from low-income families. However, the schools themselves are also poor . . . poor in the amount of dollars they expend per pupil . . . poor in the achievement levels of their students. . . and poor in the richness of the courses they offer.

The Task Force believes that some rural, small schools are as much "at risk" as the students they enroll.

We left Austin after agreeing to put our thoughts into a report to the laboratories (See "Recommendations").

The labs have identified some truly promising practices. We believe further work is required to confirm that they are "exemplary" rather than just "promising." For that reason, we recommend that the labs concentrate in the second year on studying these practices and determining what makes them successful. During a third and final year, then, we recommend that the labs make an effort to share these exemplary practices with other rural educators, policymakers, and parents.

Our concern about at-risk schools and students led us to dedicate this report to them. Poor students and their poor schools are all too often at "the end of the road" both figuratively and literally. Fortunately, our concern is shared by others, including the U.S. Congress. We were pleased to learn that the recently enacted Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of 1988 creates a new Rural Educational Opportunities program to assist these schools and their students. We recommend that the laboratories compete for funds to implement this program within their regions.

As a group we are impressed with the labs' commitment to rural, small schools. The Task Force members themselves represent numerous education and policy-making bodies. Our ranks include chief state school officers, presidents of teachers' unions, officers of national associations, members of state boards, college deans, school administrators, and PTA members. Consequently, each of us knows of numerous associations, organizations, and groups that share an interest in small and rural schools. But something is missing. And that's a national, coherent, coordinated plan for improving these rural schools. The kind of plan we envision would also spell out how

these schools can become part of a national effort to revitalize Rural America.

We believe that the laboratories and their national association, the Council for Educational Development and Research (CEDaR), have both a responsibility and an opportunity to provide some much-needed leadership within the broad rural-school community. Therefore, we recommend that they work together to develop a national policy agenda for rural, small schools.

A year from now we'll meet again, probably in the nation's capital. We'll invite others who share our interest to join us. We'll review the proposed strategy for rural, small schools. Then we'll see what we can do collectively to put it into effect.

In the meantime, the Task Force members join me in thanking our staff director, Joe Schneider, and the members of the CEDaR staff --Ullik Rouk, Carolyn Ford, Charles Spencer, and Naomi Christian-- for their assistance. We also appreciate the help provided by Steve Nelson and Jerry Kirkpatrick of Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Robert Benton, chair
National Rural, Small Schools Task Force
May, 1988

THE PROBLEM

The Forgotten Population -- Rural America's Poor Children And Their Poor Schools

The Forgotten Population--they are the more than 2.2 million children attending 2,750 rural school districts across the nation that suffer from chronic, severe "poorness."

They exist in every state--small, rural communities that have both "at-risk students" and "at-risk schools" that need attention.

These small, rural, at-risk school districts can be identified --specifically, by name, in each state-- by analyzing data assembled over the past nine months by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). One of the most significant potential uses of the database is for the network of regional educational laboratories --and other educational agencies, as well-- to identify and target assistance to the most needy schools across Rural America. Until now, many of these have simply existed at the end of the road, out of sight, out of mind.

The laboratory's "school poverty" concept is based on four aspects of "poorness":

- family poverty
- low expenditure per pupil
- low student outcomes, and
- limited curriculum offerings.

NWREL began developing the database with common core data at the school district level, using facts provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and Center for Educational Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education. Statewide student assessment results and state expenditure data were then collected and added. NWREL then was able to measure:

- **Family Wealth** based on the median family income of school age children below poverty level

- **School Wealth** based on per pupil expenditure in the district

- **Student Performance** based on basic skill achievement on statewide assessment, and the percent of disconnected youth in the district

Yet to be added to the database is information on curriculum offerings to determine school districts' limitations in the number and quality of course offerings.

To develop a list of a state's small, rural school districts in most severe need of assistance, the laboratory identified those ranking in the bottom quartile for each indicator. A district ranking in the bottom quartile in two or more indicators--family income, expenditures, or student outcomes-- ends up within the "chronic poorness" category.

A similar approach has been taken by the New York State Education Department. P. Alistair MacKinnon of that department shared with the laboratory a 1987

report, "Education and Community Renewal: Assessment of Need in Distressed Communities." It describes a methodology to identify "distressed communities" in New York State that need additional educational resources to support school-based services.

Size, rurality, and family income data for all school districts in all 50 states are included in the database at NWREL. Per pupil expenditure and student achievement data on a sample of 17 states are now entered in the database and nationwide data are projected based on the statistically representative sample.

Nationally, for all 50 states—

- 74 percent of all school districts —11,850 school districts— are small (fewer than 2,500 students) or very small (fewer than 1,000 students)

- 59 percent of all school districts —9,512 school districts— are rural (at least three-fourths of the students enrolled live in a town with less than 2,500 population or an unincorporated area)

- 51 percent of all school districts —8,227 school districts— are both small and rural

SMALL, RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Total Number of School Districts in U.S.	16,023
Total Number of Small School Districts in U.S.	11,850 (74%)
Total Number of Rural School Districts in U.S.	9,512 (59%)
Total Number of Small and Rural School Districts in U.S.	8,227 (51%)

Looking at data from the 17-state sample:

- o 49 percent of all school districts —2,587 districts—are both small and rural
- o 28 percent of these small, rural districts —717 districts— rank in the bottom quarter of districts in their state on two or more of the family wealth, per pupil expenditure and student achievement indicators
- o 316,386 children attend these 717 small, rural, poor districts

Based on the projection of these data to all 50 states:

- o 2,280 school districts are identified as small, rural and poor
- o 1,252,734 children attend these small, rural, poor districts

SMALL, RURAL, POOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	17 states (sample)	50 states (projected) sample)
Number of Small, Rural School Districts	2,587	8,227
Number of Small, Rural, Poor School Districts	717	2,280
Number of Children Attending Small, Rural, Poor School Districts	316,386	1,252,734

Furthermore, there are another 1,285 large, but rural, school districts in the nation. These larger rural school districts are predominantly county units serving small, rural communities. Of these, 470 are identified as being poor districts based on multiple indicators. An

additional 983,024 children attend schools in these larger, rural, poor districts.

RURAL, POOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	17 states (sample)	50 states (projected) sample)
Small, Rural, Poor School Districts	717	2,280
Large, Rural, Poor School Districts	66	470
Total Rural, Poor School Districts	783	2,750
Children Attending Small, Rural, Poor School Districts	316,386	1,252,734
Children Attending Large, Rural, Poor School Districts	314,549	983,024
Total Children Attending Rural, Poor School Districts	**630,935**	**2,235,758**

The Northwest Laboratory emphasizes that data do not permit comparison of school districts across states; for example, two districts with the same ranking in their respective states on per pupil expenditures can be expected to have widely varying per pupil expenditure figures. Furthermore, the data do not provide a diagnosis of the actual educational needs of an individual district.

Within each state, however, the data provide a basis for identifying small, rural districts with the greatest need. Once identified, these individual districts can be visited for an on-site analysis of their educational needs and what it would take to effectively improve their educational program for their particular students.

The states described on the following pages illustrate the need that exists across the country.

ARKANSAS

In Arkansas, 100 of the state's 273 rural school districts rank in the bottom quartile on at least two of the three poverty indicators —student achievement, family income, and per pupil expenditure. These 100 poor school districts enroll 50,813 elementary and secondary students. Further, 20 very small, rural districts rank as poor on all three indicators.

Number of Rural Districts	273
Rural Districts with Poor Student Outcomes	178
Rural Districts with Poor Family Income	104
Rural Districts with Poor Per Pupil Expenditure	59
Rural Districts Poor on 2 or More Indicators	100
(Children Enrolled in 100 Districts)	50,813
Small, Rural Districts Poor on 3 Indicators	20
(Children Enrolled in 20 Districts)	11,704

CALIFORNIA

In California, 206 of the state's 434 rural school districts rank in the bottom quartile on at least two of the three poverty indicators. These 206 poor school districts enroll 52,478 students. Further, 48 very small, rural districts rank as poor on all three indicators.

Number of Rural Districts	434
Rural Districts with Poor Student Outcomes	286
Rural Districts with Poor Family Income	201
Rural Districts with Poor Per Pupil Expenditure	146
Rural Districts Poor on 2 or More Indicators	206
(Children Enrolled in 206 Districts)	52,478
Small, Rural Districts Poor on 3 or More Indicators	48
(Children Enrolled in 48 Districts)	11,516

CONNECTICUT

In Connecticut, 14 of the state's 71 small, rural school districts rank in the bottom quartile on at least two of the three poverty indicators—student achievement, family income, and per pupil expenditure. These 14 poor school districts enroll 7,252 elementary and secondary students. Further, 4 very small, rural districts rank as poor on all three indicators.

Number of Rural Districts	71
Rural Districts with Poor Student Outcomes	17
Rural Districts with Poor Family Income	20
Rural Districts with Poor Per Pupil Expenditure	22
Rural Districts Poor on 2 or More Indicators	14
(Children Enrolled in 14 Districts)	7,252
Small, Rural Districts Poor on 3 Indicators	4
(Children Enrolled in 4 Districts)	2,040

IOWA

In Iowa, 27 of the state's 322 small, rural school districts rank in the bottom quartile on at least two of the three poverty indicators. These 27 poor school districts enroll 14,427 students. Further, 1 very small, rural district ranks as poor on all three indicators.

Number of Rural Districts	322
Rural Districts with Poor Student Outcomes	10
Rural Districts with Poor Family Income	139
Rural Districts with Poor Per Pupil Expenditure	79
Rural Districts Poor on 2 or More Indicators	27
(Children Enrolled in 27 Districts	14,427
Small, Rural Districts Poor on 3 or More Indicators	1
(Children Enrolled in the 1 District)	468

KENTUCKY

In Kentucky, 50 of the state's 93 rural school districts rank in the bottom quartile on at least two of the three poverty indicators. These 50 poor school districts enroll 161,534 students. Further, 26 rural districts rank as poor on all three indicators.

Number of Rural Districts	93
Rural Districts with Poor Student Outcomes	68
Rural Districts with Poor Family Income	45
Rural Districts with Poor Per Pupil Expenditure	34
Rural Districts Poor on 2 or More Indicators	50
(Children Enrolled in 50 Districts)	161,534
Rural Districts Poor on 3 or More Indicators	26
(Children Enrolled in 26 Districts)	89,704

MASSACHUSETTS

In Massachusetts, 32 of the state's 173 small, rural school districts rank in the bottom quartile on at least two of the three poverty indicators. These 32 poor school districts enroll 21,643 students. Further, 2 very small, rural districts rank as poor on all three indicators.

Number of Rural Districts	173
Rural Districts with Poor Student Outcomes	47
Rural Districts with Poor Family Income	74
Rural Districts with Poor Per Pupil Expenditure	14
Rural Districts Poor on 2 or More Indicators	32
(Children Enrolled in 32 Districts)	21,643
Small, Rural Districts Poor on 3 Indicators	2
(Children Enrolled in 2 Districts)	1,039

MISSISSIPPI

In Mississippi, 28 of the state's 75 rural school districts rank in the bottom quartile on at least two of the three poverty indicators. These 28 poor school districts enroll 7,022 students. Further, 1 very small, rural district ranks as poor on all three indicators.

Number of Rural Districts	75
Rural Districts with Poor Student Outcomes	53
Rural Districts with Poor Family Income	30
Rural Districts with Poor Per Pupil Expenditure	1
Rural Districts Poor on 2 or More Indicators	28
(Children Enrolled in 28 Districts)	7,022
Small, Rural Districts Poor on 3 Indicators	1
(Children Enrolled in the 1 District)	3,586

OREGON

In Oregon, 42 of the state's 218 small, rural school districts rank in the bottom quartile on at least two of the three poverty indicators. These 42 poor school districts enroll 8,468 students. Further, 8 very small, rural districts rank as poor on all three indicators.

Number of Rural Districts	218
Rural Districts with Poor Student Outcomes	47
Rural Districts with Poor Family Income	84
Rural Districts with Poor Per Pupil Expenditure	58
Rural Districts Poor on 2 or More Indicators	42
(Children Enrolled in 42 Districts)	8,468
Small, Rural Districts Poor on 3 Indicators	8
(Children Enrolled in 8 Districts)	1,522

WEST VIRGINIA

In West Virginia, 14 of the state's 33 rural school districts rank in the bottom quartile on at least two of the three poverty indicators. These 14 poor school districts enroll 73,241 students. Further, 4 rural districts rank as poor on all three indicators.

Number of Rural Districts	33
Rural Districts with Poor Student Outcomes	20
Rural Districts with Poor Family Income	16
Rural Districts with Poor Per Pupil Expenditure	10
Rural Districts Poor on 2 or More Indicators	14
(Children Enrolled in 19 Districts)	73,241
Rural Districts Poor on 3 Indicators	4
(Children Enrolled in the 4 District)	17,537

FINDINGS

Laboratories Identify 39 Promising Practices For Improving Rural Schools

The regional educational laboratories, during the first year of the rural, small schools initiative, developed or identified numerous programs, products, and processes that appear to have promise. Thirty-nine of these (See Appendix) were shared with the National Rural, Small Schools Task Force.

Generally speaking, these promising practices employ one or more of three approaches to school improvement. That is, they help schools to solve their own problems; help policymakers make sound decisions; and install proven ideas in schools and communities.

Help for Rural, Small Schools. A variety of agencies can help rural, small schools if the assistance is responsive to their needs. Technical assistance has been found useful in helping small, rural schools solve their own problems. For example, these districts can use advice on how to improve the performance of their students, how to spend dollars more wisely, and how telecommunications can be used to strengthen

their curriculum. Technical assistance is the promising practice of giving sound guidance.

Help for Policymakers. Decisions are made daily at federal, state, and local levels that affect small, rural schools. Sometimes the impact is by default, when the needs of these schools are not taken into consideration. The Task Force examined promising practices that have helped policymakers better understand the needs of small, rural schools. For example, information exists on the skills needed to teach successfully in small, rural schools. Information is available about economically sound alternatives to consolidation. Information is available about the schools themselves, their students, and communities. Research information for policymakers is the promising practice of making informed choices.

Installing Proven Ideas. A third approach is the sharing of promising practices used by rural, small schools. Rural schools are fertile soil for invention. Many of these inventions have stood the test of time. New curricula, ideas for schools restructuring, community-school partnerships, and models of educational technology have been successfully tried in small, rural schools. The dissemination and installation of these proven ideas can help other small, rural schools.

The Task Force examined each of the 39 promising practices by reviewing written descriptions, listening to individual presentations by laboratory staff on activities and preliminary results, and discussing key elements related to such priorities as use of technology, curriculum needs, at-risk children, and community involvement.

From this review, the Task Force recognized that the trial and evaluation of these practices is at different stages. In some cases, fairly complete and reliable information on the results is available. In others, the evidence of impact and effects is only preliminary. In all cases, however, available evidence suggests there is

enough promise to warrant continuation of the activities for a second year. At the end of that year, the laboratories should be able to identify those that are truly "exemplary" and deserving of widespread sharing with other rural schools.

The Task Force, at this point, has made several findings from its examination and recommends that the regional educational laboratories carefully consider them in planning and carrying out activities in year two of the initiative.

1. Activities conducted directly with rural school personnel and communities appear to hold significant potential for having an identifiable impact.

2. Identification, description, and sharing of exemplary practices already under way is important, particularly when assistance related to them is available.

3. It is important that agencies and institutions be identified that will, in the longer term, assist rural schools in utilizing products and processes developed in the initiative.

4. Special benefits accrue when activities are tied to efforts already under way by state and local agencies and institutions serving the same target audiences.

5. The effectiveness of a strategy of working "with and through" other agencies is differential, depending on both the approach being used and the needs being addressed.

6. Processes for effecting significant improvements take time; programs may be effective even if the short-term impact is limited.

7. Some activities show promise for helping to revitalize rural, small communities.

8. Opportunities exist for sharing exemplary practices with larger audiences (i.e., beyond individual laboratory regions).

9. Educational approaches that develop working relations with natural allies (i.e., agriculture) may increase impact.

10. Activities that enable small schools to continue self-improvement after the end of a project are particularly important.

11. Training trainers and others to carry out the activity is important for achieving greater impact.

12. Logical alternatives to popular distance learning activities need to be shared with rural schools.

13. Activities that target multiple schools and districts in a geographic area have potential for a larger, more cost-effective impact.

14. Activities resulting in the development of a product or process that can be used elsewhere--in addition to improvement at the development site--have the greatest potential.

15. Combining local, state, and federal resources and activities in a concerted attack on problems facing rural, small schools is desirable, if not essential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Laboratories Told To Spread Exemplary Practices; Tackle Rural Schools' Number One Problem

The Task Force is impressed with the "promising" aspects of the activities being conducted by the regional laboratories in year one of their rural, small schools initiative. But rural educators need more than the promise of improved practice. They need to know the practices work, and not just at the originating site. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the labs devote their second year of funding to documenting and replicating these activities.

The Task Force then recommends that the laboratories seek a third and final year of level funding for the $4 million rural, small school initiative. This third year would enable the labs to spread those practices identified as "exemplary" throughout the country.

The particular needs of at-risk populations trouble rural educators and policymakers. And for good reason. Data presented to the Task Force reveal that some small, rural schools suffer from chronic, severe poorness across multiple indicators. Some small,

rural communities, in other words, have at-risk schools as well as students. Both need attention.

The Task Force was pleased to learn that the U.S. Congress has just completed work on a major elementary and secondary education bill that contains a provision to address the need of poor children and poor schools in Rural America. Consequently, the Task Force recommends that the laboratories actively compete for these new funds.

Finally, the Task Force believes a national, coordinated approach is needed to address the complex set of circumstances and challenges confronting rural, small schools. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the laboratories and their national association work with other concerned associations, organizations, and agencies to develop an action plan for rural schools.

To recap, the Task Force offers four recommendations to the nine regional educational laboratories:

Recommendation One - The regional educational laboratories should devote considerable attention during the second year of the rural, small schools initiative to identifying and documenting "exemplary" programs and products from their lists of "promising" ones.

Recommendation Two - The regional educational laboratories should seek a third and final year of funding for the rural, small schools initiative. The funding should be used to spread the newly identified exemplary programs and practices across Rural America.

Recommendation Three - The regional educational laboratories should compete for funds authorized by the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary Amendments of 1988 to establish and operate regional rural assistance programs.

Recommendation Four - The regional educational laboratories and their national association, the Council for Educational Development and Research, should work with other interested parties to pull together a national policy plan for rural, small schools.

The laboratories are just completing the first year of the rural, small schools initiative. The second year will begin with the start of school this fall. Although the funding for the initiative is modest, the excitement generated by the laboratories' activities is already widespread and growing. Therefore, the Task Force is pleased to conclude its report by complimenting the laboratories on their efforts to date and applauding their plans for next year.

The end of the road will always lead to a rural, small school. The challenge is to ensure that the education it offers adequately equips students for whatever paths they elect to take after their schooling ends.

APPENDIX CONTENTS

National Rural, Small Schools Task Force Members

Map of Laboratory Regions

Listing of Regional Educational Laboratories

Description of Promising Practices

Rural Assistance Program Authorization

National Rural, Small Schools Task Force

MEMBERS

Ida S. Baker, director
Teacher Education, Certification, Staff Development and Professional Practice
Florida State Department of Education

Robert Benton, *chair*
Dean, College of Education
University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

William H. Deming, executive director
Rural School Program
Cornell University

E. Harold Fisher, president
Blue Mountain (Mississippi) College

Becky Gutierrez, former member
Datil (New Mexico) School Board

William B. Keene
Delaware State Superintendent of Schools

Randy Kimbrough, president
Kentucky Association of School Administrators

John Kohl, senior associate
Education Commission of the States

Dale Lambert, teacher
East Wenatchee, Washington

TASK FORCE MEMBERS
continued

Honorable Jodie Mahony
Arkansas State Representative

James R. Oglesby, assistant provost
University of Missouri, Columbia

Wilson H. Parran, member
Maryland State Board of Education

Eugene T. Paslov
Nevada Superintendent of Public Instruction

Marjorie Pike, past president
Tennessee Education Association

Peg Portscheller, president
North Dakota Education Association

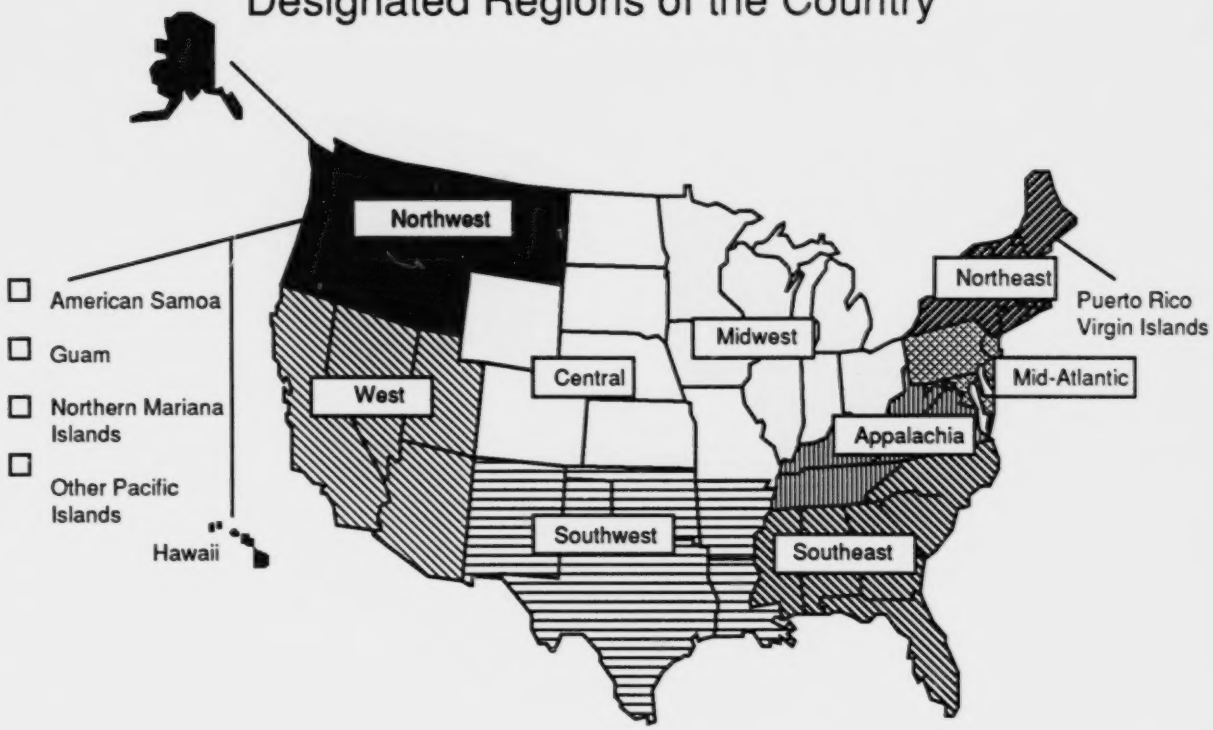
JoAn Saltzen, superintendent
Colusa (California) County Schools

Glen Shaw, executive director
Southwest/West Central (Minnesota)
Educational Services Cooperative

Honorable George Spaulding
Vermont State Senator

E. Joseph Schneider
Staff Director

Educational Laboratories Serve Designated Regions of the Country



APPALACHIA	Appalachia Educational Laboratory Charleston, West Virginia
CENTRAL	Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory Aurora, Colorado
MID-ATLANTIC	Research for Better Schools Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
MIDWEST	North Central Regional Educational Laboratory Elmhurst, Illinois
NORTHEAST	The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement for the Northeast and Islands Andover, Massachusetts
NORTHWEST	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Portland, Oregon
SOUTHEAST	Southeastern Regional Improvement Laboratory Research Triangle Park, North Carolina
SOUTHWEST	Southwest Educational Development Laboratory Austin, Texas
WESTERN	Far West Laboratory San Francisco, California

Regional Educational Laboratories

APPALACHIA

Appalachia Educational Laboratory
Post Office Box 1348
Charleston, West Virginia 25325
(304) 347-0400
Terry L. Eidell, executive director

States Served: Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia

CENTRAL

Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory
12500 East Iliff Avenue
Aurora, Colorado 80014
(303) 337-0990
C. L. Hutchins, executive director

States Served:: Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming

MID-ATLANTIC

Research for Better Schools
444 North Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19123
(215) 574-9300
John E. Hopkins, executive director

States Served: Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C.

MIDWEST

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
295 Emroy Avenue
Elmhurst, Illinois 60126
(312) 941-7677
Jane H. Arends, executive director

States Served: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

NORTHEAST

Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement
of the Northeast and Islands
290 South Main Street
Andover, Massachusetts 01810
(617) 470-0098
David P. Crandall, executive director

States Served: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virgin Islands

NORTHWEST

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S. W Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204
(503) 275-9500
Robert R. Rath, executive director

States Served: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, Northern Mariana Islands, Trust Territory of Pacific

SOUTHEAST

Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory
P.O. Box 12746
Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 27709
(919) 549-8216
Charles J. Law, Jr., executive director

States Served: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina

SOUTHWEST

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
211 East Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701
(512) 476-6861
Preston C. Kronkosky, executive director

States Served: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas

WEST

Far West Laboratory
1855 Folsom Street
San Francisco, California 94103
(415) 565-3000
Dean Nafziger, executive director
States Served: Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah

DESCRIPTION OF PROMISING PRACTICES

Program/Product Title Chapter I Program Design: Hart County (KY)

Purpose

To provide an alternative to the pull-out model of service delivery.

Description

Every regular classroom teacher serves .10 FTE as a Chapter I teacher to children in his or her classroom. Under this arrangement, when other children attend physical education or music, the Chapter I children remain with their regular classroom teacher, who provides additional help where it is needed. In this way children get twice as much help in reading or math as they would normally get from their regular teacher. Chapter I children still attend physical education and music, but at another time.

Key Features

- Pitfalls of pull-out model are avoided (e.g., class interruptions, poor communication, lack of coordination of activities);
- Improved endorsement of Chapter I program by regular educators;
- Increase in parent approval and support; decrease in requests by students for withdrawal from program;
- Standardized achievement equal to or better than pull-out program; improved grades (program evaluation in progress);
- Extra scheduling effort required of principal;
- Revised Chapter I program a key element in a successful dropout reduction program.

What We've Learned

The effectiveness of Chapter I services in small, rural schools can be improved by integrating services into the regular school program. According to the superintendent, principals play an important role in helping other staff adjust to the changes the plan entails.

Sites

Five elementary schools in Hart County, KY

Laboratory Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL)

Program/Product Title AEL Community Partnership Model for School Improvement

Purpose To create an ongoing forum in which rural school and community leaders participate in making decisions based on evidence, rather than on supposition.

Description In this project, which is based on theoretical precepts and proven practice, community members and educators are represented in equal numbers and work together to apply research findings to decide on school community improvements. They then recommend the improvements to the school board and/or local government. AEL has worked intensively with demonstration sites in two small, rural counties during the first year of its Rural, Small Schools Program. A major school improvement activity planned by each partnership is now under way in each district.

Key Features

- Half the partnership members are educators; half are community leaders;
- The model uses a committee structure designed to highlight the role information plays in decisionmaking;
- The committee structure makes wise use of members' time and ability; it also minimizes work overload;
- AEL helps collect local baseline data; provides access to educational research about issues that surface locally; and demonstrates the usefulness of educational R&D;
- Partnerships are advisory--their decisions are recommendations to official bodies (e.g. the board of education or government council).

What We've Learned The partnership model can be implemented, and community members appreciate the access the partnership provides them to decisionmaking. Partnerships are eager to learn information-based decision procedures, and they are able to make sound collaborative decisions based on those procedures. Finally, local government agencies (in these cases, boards of education) are willing to act on the recommendations of the partnerships.

Sites Braxton County Schools, Sutton, WV, Hart County Schools, Munfordville, KY. Additional sites planned for Virginia and Tennessee.

Laboratory Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL)

Program/Product Title Hart County (KY) Accelerated Program

Purpose To improve the academic curriculum and achievement of Hart County students.

Description Hart County Schools enroll about 750 students in grades 9-12. In the eigth grade about 50 students (about 30 percent of the high school enrollment) are identified for the Accelerated Program (AP). Throughout that year and in grades 9-12 they pursue a rigorous academic program. Through careful planning the school offers three foreign languages, a complete sequence of science and math courses, and six AP courses--including courses in Spanish, calculus, English, and history.

Key Features

- Careful identification of students;
- Eighth graders attend high school for half days;
- Planned course development, resulting in more comprehensive course offerings (available to all students);
- Increased offerings of and enrollment in AP courses;
- "Commonwealth Diploma" available in Hart County (state-conferred diploma with strict requirements, offered by only 30 of Kentucky's 310 high schools);
- Recognition programs to encourage and support group and individual achievement (academic tournaments, awards at board meetings and athletic events).

What We've Learned

Small rural systems can offer a challenging academic program despite the limitations of low expectations and meager resources. What's required? Leadership committed to this ideal, including careful planning, hiring, and staff development. This program was started in the 1982-83 school year with a small, one-year grant to permit eighth graders to take Algebra I at the high school. Today, college attendance is up; AP course-taking has increased tenfold and last year 11 students in this small, poor, rural county received Commonwealth diplomas. (Only 200 students in all of Louisville received Commonwealth diplomas.)

Site Hart County High School, Munfordville, KY

Laboratory Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL)

Program/Product Title Preston County (WV) Academic Center

Purpose

To provide advanced placement and low-demand high school courses to students in Preston County's five high schools.

Description

The academic center will offer advanced courses in French, math, and science. It will also offer courses, such as Spanish and Latin, that are not now available in the high school.

Planning was strongly influenced by the experience of the Governor's School for the Gifted in Virginia. The design of the center (planned to begin operations in fall 1988), however, reflects the particular needs and resources of Preston County. Financial help to establish the center came from the Appalachian Regional Commission, with matching funds from state and local governments.

Key Features

- Location at same site as county vo-tech center (350-acre farm);
- Advanced academic courses become available in disadvantaged Appalachian county;
- Relationships with home high schools maintained by students;
- Cooperation between academic program and vo-tech program;
- Transportation expenses minimized.

What We've Learned

High quality academic courses can be made available even in a rural county in the poorest state in Appalachia.

Sites

Preston County Academic Center, Kingwood, WV

Laboratory Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL)

Program/Product Title Taking the Pulse

Purpose

To collect diagnostic information about school and community strengths and weaknesses as a basis for decisionmaking.

Description

"Taking the Pulse" is a data collection system that uses two methods to help diagnose educators' and community perceptions of strengths and weaknesses in schools. One method is based on the school effectiveness literature; the other is an open-ended process that allows any view to be considered in an orderly way. The latter method can also develop data for decisionmaking in community development.

"Taking the Pulse" is the data collection system used in AEL's School-Community Partnership Model for Educational and Economic Development. However, it is a stand-alone system that can yield useful data to all school districts.

Key Features

- A school diagnosis instrument (the Profile of School Excellence) to develop data about school effectiveness;
- A community needs assessment method (using the AEL-developed DAP process) to collect data about citizens' perceptions;
- Data synthesized to help define needs and guide decisionmaking;
- Comprehensive view of the educational context.

What We've Learned

Good educational decisions must be based on appropriate data. "Taking the Pulse" provides such data. District staff can use this data in a variety of ways, even as a basis for productive community involvement in planning school improvement projects.

Sites

Braxton County Schools, Sutton WV
Hart County Schools, Munfordville, KY

Laboratory Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL)

Program/Product Title Responding to Curriculum Reform in Nevada

Purpose

To help develop a district-wide curriculum plan in Lander County School District that responds to the Nevada Course of Study curriculum framework and can serve as a model of curriculum planning for the two remaining districts in Nevada which have no district-wide curriculum.

Description

FWL is working with the Lander County Superintendent and the teacher-led Science Curriculum Committee to develop a district-wide K-12 science curriculum that will serve as a model for teacher committees developing district-wide plans for other curricular areas. The process of providing technical assistance--in curriculum design and curriculum planning and writing--to teams of elementary and secondary teachers will be documented by the laboratory for use by other Nevada districts that need a written curriculum.

Key Features

- Professional development to help elementary and secondary teachers in a small, rural district translate individual grade-level-specific science lessons into a articulated district-wide curriculum;
- Dissemination of a district curriculum development approach that incorporates teacher knowledge and skills to rural districts throughout the region.

What We've Learned

Helping teachers to articulate the scope and sequence of a curriculum content area for each grade level K-12 requires a careful balance of externally provided technical assistance, sustained district-level support for teacher curriculum committees, and inservice education. Teacher-led committees are capable of producing a district-wide curriculum, and districts benefit greatly from the leadership skills that develop in teacher curriculum developers. Teachers participating in the curriculum committees have assumed leadership roles in other areas of the school and model for colleagues the range of instructional skills and content emphases in the particular curriculum area on which they worked.

Sites

Lander County School District, Battle Mountain, NV, and Pershing and Nye County School Districts

Laboratory Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (FWL)

Program/Product Title The Great Basin Tele-Teaching Project

Purpose

To provide a full range of courses rural students need for graduation or college entrance.

Description

In Utah's vast western desert region, students attend 13 of some of the most rural and isolated schools in the state. It is common to see one or two teachers teaching all subjects at all grade levels in a K-10 or K-12 school. In these schools, it is virtually impossible to provide all the courses students need for graduation or college entrance.

FWL and the Utah State Department of Education are working with these school districts to share teachers across schools and districts through an innovative form of distance education called Tele-Teaching. Tele-Teaching is an audio-graphic system which links distant sites through the telephone and a desk-top computer. Using this system, the teacher at one school and students at other distant sites can communicate in real-time through audio-conferencing as well as by "drawing" on the monitor screen or creating graphics with the computer keyboard.

FWL is helping the schools set up the equipment, train the teachers to transmit instruction, and monitor the courses and their effects. During the first year, six rural schools in the region are transmitting courses in algebra, trigonometry, chemistry, and visual arts. During the coming year, plans call for expanding this six-school pilot effort to share additional courses among the other rural schools in the region.

Key Features

Tele-Teaching system is an affordable distance learning system which requires ordinary electronic equipment: a personal computer, monitor, modem, light pen, and dedicated phone line. Most of that equipment is available in rural schools. Unlike other distance learning systems, Tele-Teaching allows the schools to develop and transmit courses on their own without having to depend on what is available from course suppliers. Furthermore, Tele-Teaching works. Preliminary reports from Pennsylvania Tele-Teaching sites indicate that "tele-students not in the presence of a live teacher learn as well or better than students in a traditional classroom."

What We've Learned

Distance learning has powerful potential for improving the education of rural students. The key is in deciding on which distance learning system is best suited to local constraints, requirements, and opportunities.

Sites

Box Elder, Tooele, Tintic, and Millard School Districts; and the Utah State Office of Education.

Laboratory Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (FWL)

Program/Product Title	Implementing an Integrated Science Curriculum in California's Rural Elementary Schools

Purpose

To improve the quality and quantity of science instruction in rural elementary schools by integrating science teaching with other core curricular areas.

Description

FWL is working with small, rural school districts in 10 counties in northern and southern California to help teachers and principals respond to State Superintendent Honig's call for better science instruction for elementary students. Rural educators have requested help to ensure that their elementary students are exposed to the full range of scientific content and processes needed for successful performance on the sixth grade California Achievement Test in Science, to be implemented within the next three years in the state. FWL, in partnership with the Science Unit of the California State Department of Education, UC Berkeley's Lawrence Hall of Science, Science in Rural California Project (SIRC), and County Office staff developers in 10 rural counties, is helping rural districts select and train mentor science teachers who will work directly with elementary teachers. The mentors will be participants in a statewide science mentor network.

In addition to a science mentor network for rural elementary schools, FWL plans to publish a casebook in which elementary teachers and science mentors write about their experiences. This publication, co-sponsored by the California State Department of Education, will be compiled and edited in the spring and summer of 1989.

Key Features

- Developing County Office capacity for staff development in science instruction for elementary teachers;
- Training and supporting science mentors in rural elementary schools;
- Extending the professional literature about teaching science in the elementary grades through the publication of a casebook on K-6 science instruction.

What We've Learned

Rural schools rely on district, county or regional networks for crucial staff development programs. Assistance in science instruction for elementary schools is especially important: few elementary teachers enter the profession with a strong science background, and even those who do have little training in how to teach and reinforce science processes throughout the curriculum. Technical assistance in developing mentor training and networks within districts and regions, and in recording critical learning of elementary teachers regarding the special challenges of teaching science in small rural schools, has proved to be a welcome and productive way of meeting rural schools' needs in California.

Sites

San Benito and Winters Unified School Districts and School Districts in Butte, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity counties.

Laboratory	Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (FWL)

Program/Product Title	Statewide Staff Development for Nevada's New Arts and Humanities Requirement

Purpose

Provide Nevada's rural high school teachers with the resources and skills they need to prepare and teach a new required course on interdisciplinary arts and humanities.

Description

Nevada recently established a new interdisciplinary arts and humanities requirement for graduation. Most secondary teachers in the state--especially those in small, isolated rural communities--lack the resources, knowledge, and skills to teach courses to meet the requirement. To assist these teachers, FWL helped Nevada's state education department form a consortium, which also included the University of Nevada at Reno, Nevada Humanities Committee, Nevada State Council on the Arts, and Northern Nevada Community College, to provide a statewide inservice program for small, rural schools most in need--those 17 high schools serving fewer than 200 students. Teachers from these rural high schools have received training to develop integrated arts and humanities instructional units.

Key Features

- Pooling resources of a variety of state agencies to help rural teachers;
- As a result of inservice workshops, rural teachers developed integrated arts and humanities instructional units and shared them with one another;
- The participating teachers formed a network to continue to exchange ideas and resources and support one another.

What We've Learned

Resources in rural communities are available and can be capitalized on; they need to be identified, organized, and directed to address local needs.

Sites

Douglas County, Carson City, Humboldt County, Lyon County, Elko County, Clark County, Lincoln County, and White Pine School Districts.

Laboratory	Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (FWL)

Program/Product Title Colorado Science Clusters

Purpose

To improve science instruction in Colorado rural schools.

Description

The Colorado Science Cluster Program, now over five years old, was initiated by McREL's Rural Education Project, Colorado State University's Office for Rural Education, the Northeast Colorado Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and six member schools. Providing quality science instruction in small schools is difficult. Elementary teachers are often not well prepared and therefore uncomfortable in teaching science. Secondary teachers, because they are often the only science teacher, may have as many as five or six different preparations a day for which they are not equally well prepared, and some of which are laboratory classes that must be taught with minimal supplies and equipment. A support system is needed for ongoing professional development which is both easily accessible for teachers and affordable for districts. Using a cluster strategy developed by McREL, a resource person from Colorado State University meets with teachers approximately once a month to work on curriculum and effective approaches to science instruction. The program has been expanded from one to 10 BOCES; the numbers of teachers involved in the clusters range from 20 to 44. The original seed money from McREL has now been replaced by special grant money from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.

Key Features

The Colorado Science Clusters represent long-term collaboration among rural school districts, intermediate service agencies and an institution of higher education. The agenda for the inservice programs are determined by the participating teachers. Costs not covered by grant funds are shared by the local districts. Bringing teachers together in clusters reduces the isolation experienced when you are a one-of-a-kind teacher, provides a support network, and makes more efficient use of university resource personnel.

What We've Learned

An outside neutral, McREL, played an important role initially in conveying the key players and establishing the ground rules for successful collaboration. With commitment from IHE personnel, assistance that is perceived to be of value on the part of participating teachers, and small amounts of outside money, successful long-term collaboration is possible. The cluster strategy is an economic and effective strategy for facilitating rural school improvement.

Sites

The original cluster with one BOCES and six schools in the far northeast corner of Colorado has now been joined by 10 clusters involving BOCES and rural school districts across the state.

Laboratory Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)

Program/Product Title Decisions About Technology

Purpose

To provide information that assists educators in understanding technology applications in small school settings and integrating technology into existing instructional programs; to help small rural schools purchase quality equipment at the best price; to provide staff development for the effective implementation of systems selected; and to assist state education agency staff in the development of a statewide technology plan.

Description

Decisions About Technology is a statewide effort serving North Dakota. A state technology plan has been written which includes the establishment of a number of pilot efforts to implement different technology configurations. Assistance has been provided in organizing a number of school clusters which are using instruction by satellite and linking schools for instruction via computer/audio conferencing networks and fiber-optics interactive video. Funds for equipment have been secured from a special legislative technology equipment appropriation. A spring technology conference is being held to 1) address the policy/state regulation issues related to distance learning, 2) begin a network support system for the technology pilots for information exchange and ongoing technical assistance, and 3) showcase the work of the pilots for other interested schools in the state.

Key Features

- Innovative organizational arrangements are being established among local districts, institutions of higher education, the state education agency, public television, and the private sector for the implementation of technology;

- In a state where the majority of the schools are small and likely to remain small, better use is being made of specialized teachers and scarce resources while expanding available instructional opportunities for students and access to staff development for teachers and administrators.

What We've Learned

Developing state plans, convening local districts and institutions of higher education for the purpose of collaboration and assisting those collaborative agencies to develop plans for implementing technology requires outside assistance. State agency personnel, particularly in North Dakota, are spread very thin, leaving little slack to take on new initiatives such as technology. Rural school superintendents also wear multiple hats and have little time for development activities. Furthermore, it is difficult for one superintendent to play a leadership role with his peers and to facilitate meetings around issues of district collaboration. A neutral facilitator fares much better. The problems related to the "technology" are the easy ones to solve. The "human" problems of staff development and changing policy and regulations to accommodate new technology are more difficult.

Sites

Work on the state plan impacts, to a degree, all districts in the state. Direct assistance has been provided to five clusters involving 44 districts.

Laboratory Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)

Program/Product Title Inter-state 70 Rural School Improvement Program

Purpose

To assist small, isolated rural schools in eastern Colorado to plan and implement programs which will improve their capacity to provide quality educational programs.

Description

The Inter-state 70 Rural School Improvement Program involves the East-central Colorado Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and 13 of the 15 member schools which stretch out along the I-70 corridor east of Denver to the Kansas border. School enrollments range from about 50 800 students K-12. With the exception of the two schools nearest Denver (about 40 miles), which are feeling some effects of metropolitan growth, all have declining enrollments and shrinking budgets due to the decline of the agricultural economy. The Colorado State Department of Education requested assistance from McREL to work with this set of schools in planning, designing and implementing collaborative activities which will help the districts maintain quality programs in a time of limited resources and expanding expectations. Planning sessions have examined the changing society, local/ regional social and economic trends, and alternatives in rural school design that hold promise for improving educational opportunities for students attending these schools. Local committees have been formed to develop plans for their particular community. McREL, with the assistance of the East-central BOCES, facilitates the design and implementation of the plans to establish collaborative arrangements among neighboring districts. The program is in the first year of what is expected to be ongoing activity.

Key Features

- The I-70 Rural School Improvement Program is a collaborative effort of local districts, an intermediate service agency, the state education agency, and McREL. The outside agencies facilitate and provide support for plans that have been developed locally;
- Where the agenda of local communities coincide, clusters are formed to share ideas and make the best use of limited resources. Local planning committees represent a high level of participation on the part of community leaders.

What We've Learned

Enthusiastic leadership and support from the school superintendent is key. The problems extend beyond the boundaries of the school and include the need for economic development. The deterioration of the rural economy has resulted in schools being more willing to become involved in cooperative activities with neighboring schools and communities. The state education agency plays a critical role in establishing a "safe" climate to explore non-traditional options for improving rural schools.

Sites

Bennett, Byers, Strasburg, Deer Trail, Flagler, Genoa-Hugo, Limon, Burlington, Stratton, Bethune, Karval, and Agate School Districts

Laboratory Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)

Program/Product Title Project ACCESS

Purpose

To provide career planning assistance to students which will raise expectations and increase motivation; result in better post-secondary career choices; and ease the transition to and help insure success in post-secondary experiences. The program also assists students, educators, and community leaders in understanding the environmental changes taking place in the region and strengthens the counseling programs in rural schools so that they are better equipped to provide information about post-secondary options.

Description

Project ACCESS targets rural schools enrolling 400 or fewer students in high school in northwest Missouri. Six planning meetings have educators and community leaders to inform McREL about existing career guidance activities and fine-tune proposed ACCESS activities. Regional training sessions, designed to examine local social and economic trends, have been held for facilitators of community forums. Access has been provided to career guidance materials not always available to small, rural schools. Regional workshops have been held which have provided motivational sessions for students, test taking (ACT and SAT) sessions for guidance counselors, and training sessions for community leaders who will serve as mentors for rural school graduates.

Key Features

- Creates networks of agencies concerned with career planning and economic development that do not normally work together, such as regional institutions of higher education, extension agencies, and service clubs, along with rural schools;
- Visioning strategies developed by Olympic competitors are being used to improve student motivation and expectations;
- A cadre of "significant others" is being developed to serve as mentors to motivate, direct, and support students during their post-secondary period.

What We've Learned

The original design of project ACCESS was the result of discussions between McREL and Congressman Coleman, who represents the region served by the project. Subsequent design modifications have been made in consultation with school personnel to tailor the program to their particular needs. For example, in northwest Missouri, there is as much need for "job fairs" as college information. Moreover, in this project, having video tapes available for college information is better than traveling to college information sessions. Also, planning related to economic development is best done at the community level rather than the regional level.

Sites

Eighty-two sites in northwest Missouri qualify to participate in Project ACCESS. Approximately half of those sites are currently a part of ACCESS activities.

Laboratory Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)

Program/Product Title The Rural School and Community Development

Purpose

To develop a model for making community development a part of the school program; to assist school districts in the implementation of the model, which includes using the community as a focus of study, e.g. the collection, analysis, and reporting of economic social trend data; to develop an entrepreneurial curriculum; and to use the district as an incubator for school-based enterprises and procedures for spinning off those enterprises when they have properly matured.

Description

The public school plays an important economic role in its local community. It is often the largest employer as well as the largest purchaser of goods and services. We have assumed that the impact of the schools is an economic plus. However, this is not the whole story. While local tax dollars have been fed into the system, the most important resource, the community's young people, have for the most part been educated to leave, either to continue their education or find employment in larger urban centers. By including in the educational program experiences that provide a better understanding of the career opportunities in the community and the skills needed to take advantage of those opportunities, students will have the option to stay, if they so choose. The community development curriculum not only enriches students' educational experience but makes the school a key contributor to the economic health of the community.

Key Features

- School and community leaders are involved in re-examining the mission of the school to determine how it can play a central role in the economic health of the community;
- Education becomes real as students are involved in the study of the community, learning entrepreneurial skills, and creating small businesses;
- A state-level resource committee involving key governmental, business, and educational leaders provides legitimacy and technical support to the program.

What We've Learned

The concept has widespread appeal among community and state leaders. The general reaction is why haven't we done this before. There are many different ways that the program can be built into the program with an enthusiastic teacher being the key. A social studies class in one school is working with the Chamber of Commerce to collect and analyze data for a low-cost housing project; another school has started classes for studying the history of the community and conducting research and development activities; at another school a journalism class is writing feature stories on existing businesses for publication in the local paper and broadcast on the local radio station. Working with and through a well established intermediate service agency and a cluster of pilot sites is an effective implementation strategy.

Sites

The Black Hills Special Services Cooperative and the Belle Fourche, Custer, Edgemont, Harding County, Hill City, Hot Springs, Lyman, and Lead-Deadwood SD, School Districts

Laboratory Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)

Program/Product Title The Rural Education Agenda in Iowa: Developing Performance-Based Pay Plans and Planning Next Steps

Purpose

To support the development of district-based models for developing, implementing, and evaluating performance-based pay plans; and to identify fundamental issues facing rural education in Iowa and develop an agenda for collaborative action addressing the issues.

Description

This two-pronged project supports the efforts of Iowa's rural education community to address one of its immediate concerns and to identify and address emerging concerns. The present issue, performance-based pay, is addressed through a series of conferences and workshops across the state. The issues of tomorrow are identified through an ongoing forum of the state's rural education stakeholders. The activities will be conducted by a team from the Iowa Department of Education, universities, area education agencies, and rural and other education organizations.

Key Features

- The outcomes of the project are extremely salient. Performance-based pay is a national issue as well as an Iowa rural education issue.
- The rural education agenda will be one of the first rural education agendas developed for a state.
- Project activities provide new opportunities for Iowa's educational resource provider and organizations to collaborate.

What We've Learned

The project described above is not the project originally planned. Personnel changes, upcoming rural education activities in the state, and the probability of a second year of funding had created an opportunity to undertake a project which would have a broader and more significant impact on rural education in Iowa, the north central region, and the nation. In February 1988, new plans were developed; in March commitments from resource providers were secured; and activities commenced in April. Thus, while there is little to report on the project itself, the speed with which the new plan was developed and implemented is evidence of the importance of the issues it addresses and the efficacy of strong state department leadership.

Sites

The performance-based pay activities are open to all rural districts in the state. The members of the forum represent the full spectrum of rural education constituencies.

Laboratory North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)

Program/Product Title Collaborative Program Planning in Rural Districts: Illinois, Indiana, and Minnesota

Purpose

To assist 12 rural districts in Illinois to develop reading program improvement plans and their two Educational Service Centers to build their capacities to support such efforts of all the districts they serve; to support the efforts of seven rural districts served by three Indiana Educational Centers to develop district improvement plans; and to assist nine rural districts in southwestern Minnesota to develop communications program improvement plans integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking curricula and instruction.

Description

Each of the projects helps participants to address a high-priority, statewide educational initiative. All focus on promoting data-driven planning by district teams composed of administrators and teachers. Collaboration is the name of the game; the district teams work with each other and with intermediate service agency, state department, and NCREL staff.

Key Features

- o A significant degree of local control;
- o In Illinois, districts decided the focus of their reading program improvement plans;
- o In Indiana, each cluster of districts and their Indiana Service Center determined the focus of their district improvement plan;
- o All districts decided that their plans should focus on the elements of effective schools, increasing the possibilities of collaborative plan development;
- o Minnesota districts clustered themselves on the basis of the stages in the state's Planning, Evaluating, and Reporting process;
- o In Minnesota, where districts belong to two telecommunications networks, a substantial portion of project activities took place "at a distance."

What We've Learned

These projects have demonstrated that collaboration is a viable strategy for multiplying scarce human, material, and financial resources which rural districts can bring to bear on planning program and district improvement efforts.

Sites

Sherrard, Macomb, Schuyler, Winchester, Greenfield, Warsaw School Districts in Illinois
South Spencer, South West Parke, Spencer Owen, Orleans, Rising Sun, Switzerland School Districts in Indiana
Ortonville, Madison, Montevideo, Appleton, Dawson, Maynard, Milan, Granite Falls Benson, Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunberg, Clarfield School Districts in Minnesota

Laboratory North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)

Program/Product Title Large-Audience, Rural Staff Development on a Shoestring: Michigan and Ohio

Purpose

To provide staff development on the processes of reading curriculum review and staff development planning for all interested districts in Michigan's Upper Peninsula; to expand the cadre of reading program improvement trainers in the Upper Peninsula; to provide staff development on study skills curricula and instruction for teams from all interested school corporations in Ohio; and to support the efforts of up to 19 teams to develop video- or print-based staff development materials on study skills instruction.

Description

Staff from the Michigan and Ohio Departments of Education designed and are conducting these projects. Each project combines proven staff development structures, resources, and strategies in innovative ways to reach large numbers of rural educators for very few dollars.

Both projects move from knowledge-building to expertise-building. The initial knowledge-building activities are open to teams from all school systems in a large geographical area. The projects continue with expertise-building activities for some of the teams. In Michigan, teams determine the extent to which they wish to participate in these activities. In Ohio, teams decide whether to compete for small grants to develop video- or print-based staff development materials. In both cases, the expertise-building activities yield resources for further staff development. In Michigan, the resources are trainers; in Ohio, they are materials.

Key Features

- The projects are staff development opportunities. School systems choose to participate. Continued participation reflects continued commitment and, in Ohio, expertise as well;
- An effective, statewide staff development infrastructure existed before either project started;
- The projects result in an expanded pool of staff development resources for participants and other rural educators.

What We've Learned

Both projects show how far rural staff development dollars can be stretched to reach large numbers of rural educators spread over very large areas. Local interest and state department resources operating in an already-established climate of school improvement through staff development made the projects possible and contributed to their success.

Sites

In Michigan, open to all districts in the Upper Peninsula; in Ohio, open to all school corporations

Laboratory North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)

Program/Product Title	Investigating the Conditions of Rural Education in the North Central Region: Strategies and Data

Purpose To begin building a rural education data base for the north central region.

Description This strand of work consists of four projects: (1) A multi-site evaluation of the telecommunications-supported staff development and technical assistance provided by Wisconsin Rural Reading Improvement Project; (2) development of computer-based, self-documentation procedures supporting rural school and district decisionmaking about curriculum, instruction, and staff development; (3) an investigation of the regional conditions of rural education based on large, computer-readable data bases; and (4) a regional assessment of telecommunications-based staff development needs/resources.

The projects employ a diverse repertoire of investigative strategies to identify and/or meet the priority information needs of a wide variety of rural education decisionmakers. Staff from the Center for Educational Evaluation and Policy Studies, the Center for Governmental Studies, and the Department of Educational Technology of Northern Illinois University and from NCREL are conducting the projects.

Key Features

- The projects focus on roles that technologies are playing or can play in rural education;
- The projects balance investigative breadth and depth. Hence, they complement each other.
  Conditions (e.g., needs/resources) and processes (e.g. school improvement and staff development) are documented.
  Qualitative and quantitative methodologies are used.
  Data from practice and research are cross-validated.
  Primary audiences from district decisionmakers through state and national educational decisionmakers.

Northern Illinois University's contribution of staff significantly expanded the scale of the documentation projects.

What We've Learned Preliminary results show that in the Wisconsin project, start-up problems have been addressed. Teaching reading as thinking is catching on. District leadership teams show promise. People are using the computer network very frequently. Using large, computer-readable data bases to document rural education conditions in the region becomes difficult once the large, national data bases are exhausted because of the diversity of conditions, data collection, and analyses. Dimensions for self-documentation in rural and non-rural schools are similar. Differences arise in the variables comprising the dimensions. A computer-based self-documentation system for rural schools and districts is feasible. Data suggest that rural schools and districts use telecommunications technologies almost exclusively for student instruction and rarely to provide staff development.

Sites

North Central Region (NCREL)

Laboratory	North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Program/Product Title The Wisconsin Rural Reading Improvement Project: High-Tech Staff Development with a Personal Touch

Purpose

To improve reading programs in eighteen small, rural districts in five west-central counties in Wisconsin through a research-based, technologically supported staff development; and to demonstrate a viable way to deliver technical assistance and staff development using a variety of telecommunication-based delivery systems and types of programming.

Description

The project develops the staff development capacities of leadership teams from 18 districts made up of the elementary building principal, reading specialist, and library-media specialist. The district leadership team and project staff provide extensive staff development for selected teachers. However, all K-8 teachers who teach reading will receive staff development to help students expand their strategic reading ability in subsequent years and in order to begin the long-term improvement of the K-12 reading program. The project is a collaborative effort of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the Wisconsin Public Radio and Television Networks, three Cooperative Educational Service Units, Viterbo College, and the districts.

Key Features

- o District leadership teams consisting of the elementary principal, the district reading specialist, and the district library media specialist;
- o Five technologies: broadcast public television, instructional television fixed service, narrowcast public radio, telephone conferencing, and computer mail and forum;
- o Model of reading as a goal-directed, interactive thinking process to construct meaning;
- o Coaching and strategy modeling for teachers;
- o Thorough evaluation of project processes and results using quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

What We've Learned

The project has demonstrated that an appropriate combination of telecommunications and face-to-face staff development activities and district commitment can bring about substantial improvements in rural district reading programs. This approach to reading program improvement shows promise for improvement efforts across the curriculum and in non-rural settings.

Sites

Eighteen small, rural districts in five west-central counties in Wisconsin

Abbotsford, Alma Center, Athens, Blair, Bruce, Cornell, Edgar, Eleva-Strum, Fall Creek, Granton, Greenwood, Independence, Lake Holcombe, Melrose-Mindoro, New Auburn, Spencer, Stratford, Weyerhouser School Districts

Laboratory North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)

Program/Product Title Capacity Building for Rural School Improvement

Purpose

To increase practitioners' and regional service providers' knowledge and skills in promoting rural school improvement through the use of R&D resources.

Description

This program features the development, packaging, and dissemination of multi-media materials, as well as training in their application. Two sets of materials are being developed. The Rural Educators' Audio Lending Library is a collection of audio tapes on subjects ranging form school leadership in curriculum development. It is accessible to rural educators throughout the region on a loan basis. To date, the laboratory has reviewed and selected approximately 70 audio tapes for inclusion in the library. The Rural Linking Agents' Tool Kit is a collection of school improvement materials containing a variety of resource tools for use by rural service providers. It includes technical assistance guides, staff development modules, training exercises, simulation games, promising practice descriptions, and other resource tools.

Key Features

- o Multi-media resources that enhance the extent of use;
- o Materials geared to other service providers as well as to practitioners, potentially extending impact beyond initial clients;
- o Training in the application of Tool Kit resources.

What We've Learned

Primarily due to time and money limitations, and lack of access to external assistance, rural educators often are unable to take advantage of the latest R&D findings on school improvement. They frequently can't travel to national or even regional conferences, and they seldom receive the guidance of outside service providers. Ready access to such information is highly valued and actively used. Also, in developing and compiling relevant resources the laboratory discovered that many processes and materials that relate to rural education reform are similar to those that effect improvement initiatives in non-rural settings. For example, audio tapes describing techniques for effective strategic planning contain information that is as applicable in a farming community as in an urban area, as is a simulation game highlighting dynamics of the change process.

Sites N/A

Laboratory The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands

Program/Product Title Demonstration Sites

Purpose

To assist local teams in strategic planning and the development/adoption of model programs in selected rural, small schools, focusing on improving thinking, reasoning, and other basic skills of low-income and/or low-achieving students; and to develop case studies documenting implementation progress and problems in demonstration sites.

Descriptions

Demonstration sites have been identified in Maine, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Laboratory assistance has varied across sites but has focused on establishing local planning teams in each site to plan and implement a specific school improvement project. In Maine, we work with the state education agency to establish the "Success Through Involvement Project" in the seven "Unorganized Territory Schools"; in New York we work with two of the state education agency's "Pilot Community Schools Project"; in Massachusetts, Vermont, and Connecticut we focus on thinking skills projects; in Puerto Rico we emphasize mathematics and students' learning styles; and in the Virgin Islands we focus on a telecommunications project among rural island schools. Improvement efforts are documented in comprehensive case studies of the technical assistance intervention.

Key Features

- Intensive, on-site/off-site technical assistance provided by cadre of service providers from the Lab, universities, the SEAs, and intermediate service agencies;
- Focus on representative internal improvement teams;
- Detailed case studies;
- Target population consists of "youth at-risk" and improvement projects often include entire local community.

What We've Learned

Case study analyses of demonstration site project efforts are still in process, but several issues have surfaced. The most significant have centered on the reactions to attempts to introduce "school improvement" and "technical assistance." Staff in these rural sites have had minimal exposure to "outsiders," and most have limited experience with planned change and innovation, so much time has been dedicated at each site to developing a conducive context and defining appropriate foci for the project. Once established, however, assistance and support have been highly valued.

Sites

Unorganized Territory Schools, ME; Addison and Malone School Districts, NY; Sheldon and Roxbury School Districts, VT; Ware, Hatifield, Hadley, and Belchertown School Districts, MA; Brooklyn and EastfordSchool Districts, CT; Morovis and Cienega Baja School Districts, Puerto Rico; and Cruz Bay, Coral Bay School Districts, Virgin Islands

Laboratory The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands

Program/Product Title Promising Practices and Practitioners in Rural/Small Schools

Purpose

To identify, document, and disseminate educational programs, practices, and ideas that demonstrate particular promise in rural and small schools in the region; and to recognize outstanding teachers in the region, document and disseminate their strategies for success, and engage these individuals in the ongoing work of the Lab's Rural Initiative.

Description

This program has two components:

Ideas That Work in Small Schools. Working with and through the Rural Schools Program at Cornell University, the laboratory to date has supported the research and development of 16 profiles of promising practices throughout the region. These descriptions are sent to rural and small schools throughout the region and will be packaged within a loose-leaf binder for widespread dissemination at the end of the project.

Teacher Recognition Program. To identify rural practitioners who have demonstrated noteworthy successes in teaching critical thinking skills, the laboratory has solicited nominations from throughout the region, assembled "portfolios of accomplishment" for nominees, and established a selection panel for their review. All selected nominees will be featured at a regional forum, their programs/methods will be described in a widely disseminated notebook, and they will will receive a small honorarium in recognition of their accomplishments.

Key Features

- Use of practicing rural educators (peers) to conduct identification, review, and documentation activities;
- Effective use of the "with and through" strategy, capitalizing on ongoing efforts by current service providers in the region;
- Presentation of information in short, attractive, readily-accessible formats;
- Use of nominators' perceptions of "promise" rather than rigorous evaluation data validating practices and practitioners as "exemplary."

What We've Learned

One of the most serious consequences of the geographic isolation of rural educators is that they have limited opportunities to learn from each others' experiences. Although promising practices have been developed throughout the region, most remain undiscovered, and practitioners must reinvent the wheel time and time again. Similarly, individual teachers who have demonstrated exemplary successes are seldom recognized for their work, and often must continue fighting the good fight in continued isolation, without recognition or rewards for their outstanding performance. Documentation and dissemination of individual successes and promising practices, packaged in easy-to-access formats, are highly appreciated and frequently used to catalyze similar efforts at other local schools.

Sites N/A

Laboratory The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands

Program/Product Title Small Schools Network

Purpose

To network small and/or rural school districts in order to assist them in addressing common needs and goals, and in sharing success and resources; and to provide readily usable resources targeted to issues of current interest to small and/or rural schools.

Description

Over 600 school districts and educational service agencies are currently members of the laboratory's Small Schools Network (SSN). In their role as linking agents, SSN staff promote improved communication among small and/or rural districts throughout the region by sponsoring meetings, developing and disseminating resource materials, and providing information services. Activities to date include conducting of 14 Regional School Improvement Forums on such topics as "Creative Curriculum Alternatives," "Distance Learning," and "Attracting and Retaining Teachers," producing and disseminating bimonthly Alert newsletter and quarterly Information Exchange Packets; piloting "Visiting Teacher Program"; and maintaining comprehensive resource center.

Key Features

- Free membership;
- Activities planned and conducted with active participation of rural practitioners;
- Extensive and varied dissemination strategies;
- Flexible, responsive program of work, customized to address specific local needs.

What We've Learned

Through the activities of the Small Schools Network we have discovered that local conditions are often idiosyncratic, requiring customized attention. Generic materials related to issues facing rural and small school educators nationwide are helpful, but local practitioners crave assistance in applying this information within their own unique settings. Dissemination of information is most effective when accompanied by opportunities (e.g. SSN Forums) for face-to-face discussion of issues and implications. We have also learned that rural educators are extremely eager to discover what and how their colleagues in other, similar districts are doing. They are too often isolated from each other, as well as from new ideas, information, and assistance. Their interest in professional growth is extremely high; their opportunities for such growth are extremely limited.

Sites N/A

Laboratory The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands

Program/Product Title Distance Education Technical Assistance Process

Purpose

To assist educators in the systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of distance education technologies to meet the curriculum needs of rural, small schools.

Description

Direct, onsite technical assistance was provided during the 1987-88 school year to state, intermediate, and local education agencies to identify: (1) policy issues affecting distance education; (2) curriculum needs of rural, small schools—addition of offerings and enhancement of existing offerings; (3) alternative strategies for addressing curriculum needs—in school, cooperative and technological approaches; (4) alternative distance education delivery systems—costs, benefits and constraints; (5) alternative courseware for using technology for instruction; and (6) procedures for evaluating distance education delivery.

Key Features

The use of distance education technology to address the curriculum and staff development needs of small, rural schools requires careful attention to the planning and design of quality instruction. Technology offers new mediums for the delivery of instruction, which compound the attention which must be given to sound policy, systematic planning, responsive curriculum, and quality instruction. Technical assistance helps guide educators through these considerations to ensure that students from small, rural schools receive a quality education.

What We've Learned

State education agencies are concerned about their appropriate role in developing policy and resources for guiding distance education delivery. Distance education providers and subscribers are concerned about balancing costs with effectiveness. New roles and responsibilities are emerging to respond to distance education delivery. As one example, in televised course offerings, the knowledge and skills of the classroom supervisor are critical to the success of instruction.

Sites

Washington State Telecommunications Task Force, ESD 101, Satellite Telecommunications Education Program (STEP), Darby Public Schools (MT), Jewell School District (OR), and Yamhill ESD (OR) high school consortia.

Laboratory Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

Program/Product Title Idaho Rural Education Delivery System

Purpose

IREDS is a cooperative effort of the Idaho Department of Education, Boise State University, The Simplot/Micron Center and Idaho Educational Public Broadcasting. It is intended to increase the availability of high quality secondary course offerings in rural, small schools through distance learning technology.

Description

During the 1987-88 school year, a course in precalculus was provided to students in five Idaho rural, small schools. Instruction was provided live from Boise via the public education television network. Student interaction was provided by telephone. Statewide public broadcasting system reaches essentially all schools in the state at a cost lower than satellite delivery.

Key Features

- Enables small, rural schools to offer high quality instruction in areas where local teachers are not trained or available;
- Exposes rural students to other students and teachers;
- Utilizes curriculum and instruction approved by the state.

What We've Learned

NWREL conducted an evaluation of IREDS which found:

- Student knowledge and skill acquisition equalled or exceeded traditional class;
- Student attitude toward mathematics and academic self concept equalled or exceeded traditional class;
- 95 percent of the parents felt that their son or daughter had benefited from the class;
- 90 percent of the parents felt IREDS was an effective way of offering high school courses in rural areas;
- 85 percent of the parents felt that IREDS should be expanded.

Sites

Boise State University studio class, Nezperce, Mackay, Marsing, McCall and Rockland High Schools (ID)

Laboratory Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

Program/Product Title Rural School Improvement Process

Purpose

To implement and define a long-term, research-based school improvement process for small, rural schools that addresses rural school needs by focusing on student performance data as a basis for decisionmaking, developing a local training capacity, and increasing cooperation within and among rural schools as a means of reducing problems associated with school size and isolation.

Description

Three school training clusters were established in Idaho and three in Montana. Each cluster consists of three to five schools that receive training together. School leadership teams are trained in the improvement process over two years. Each of six workshops requires leadership teams to learn a specific activity and then apply their skills in the school setting. The process begins by training principals in selecting leadership teams and in the research literature on effective schooling. Leadership teams learn how to (1) develop a profile of student performance; (2) involve staff in selecting a school-wide improvement goal based on their school profile; and (3) develop, implement, and evaluate a research-based school plan for achieving their goal.

Key Features

- Children at Risk: Leadership teams are trained to analyze student performance data to identify how all school populations are performing, develop a data-based goal, and create a research-based improvement plan;
- Curriculum Needs: The improvement plan is developed by school staff and draws on the research on effective schooling. This required cooperative planning and curricular alignment across grade levels;
- Staff Development: School staff engage in staff development in the improvement process as well as select development strategies for goal achievement;
- Cooperation: All training occurs through cooperative learning activities within school clusters that bring diverse rural schools together.

What We've Learned

A high level of teaching expertise exists in rural schools, but is underused because of school isolation and the lack of a systematic process for sharing expertise within and among schools. This isolation and limited resources reduce improvement efforts and teacher motivation to change. Once introduced to a systematic, research-based improvement process, teachers are eager to learn a process for improving student performance.

Sites

Montana: Three clusters of 13 schools representing eight rural districts
Idaho: Three clusters of 14 schools representing 11 rural districts

Laboratory Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

Program/Product Title	Satellite Telecommunications Education Program (STEP)

Purpose

To increase the availability of secondary course offerings nationally using distance learning technology.

Description

STEP is a joint effort of Eastern Washington University, Educational Service District (ESD)101 (Spokane, WA) and the Telecommunications Cooperative. EDS 101 is guided by a cooperative board of subscriber school districts which prescribes the content and schedule of courses to be delivered. The ESD hires instructors and contracts with Eastern Washington University for studio production facilities, uplink transmission, and satellite time. In the 1987-88 school year, the program offered courses in advanced placement English, Spanish I, Spanish II, Japanese, and precalculus through one-way video and two-way audio (telephone). Teacher in-service is also provided. About 600 students are being served in 50 small, rural high school districts in five states.

Key Features

- Satellite video linkage with two-way audio via dedicated telephone line provides reliable service;
- Practitioners cooperative governs the scope and schedule of instruction;
- Course offerings provided in speciality areas which schools may not be able to address;
- Large subscribership enables cost-effective instruction.

What We've Learned

Cooperative governance of the programming not only enhances curriculum planning, but also "ownership" of the system.

Teachers continue to make the difference. Televised teachers must be well organized, have clear expectations, convey personal interest to students, and work toward high levels of academic learning time.

Sites

Fifty small, rural high school districts in five states

Laboratory	Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

Program/Product Title Teacher Preparation for Small, Rural Schools

Purpose To demonstrate a need for special rural teacher education training; to identify specific strategies for addressing these training needs; and to identify exemplary rural-focused professional development programs.

Description This product describes the characteristics of small, rural schools and communities, differentiating them from their urban/suburban counterparts. It also discusses how these rural characteristics can be addressed through professional development activities. A review of current teacher education programs and their content is presented and contrasted with small, rural school teaching needs. A matrix which aligns rural characteristics with training strategies concludes part one. Part two reviews exemplary rural programs in the NWREL region.

Key Features

- o Prepares teachers for working in small, rural schools by developing awareness of the unique features of rural schools and communities that have been found to effect rural teacher success;
- o Presents planning matrix of rural characteristics along with strategies found to successfully prepare teachers for meeting the curriculum, staff development, student, and community needs;
- o Includes selected exemplary professional development programs currently addressing these characteristics.

What We've Learned

- o There is a lack of specific training focused on rural, small schools at the majority of teacher training institutions nationally;
- o Several rural teacher training programs currently exist that address the unique needs of rural schools. Often, however, these programs operate in isolation from one another;
- o Rural teacher turnover has been reduced when preservice-inservice programs are provided to rural educators;
- o Since the announcement of the publication in the Northwest Report, we have received feedback from rural educators in the region supporting our effort and requesting copies of the report.

Sites

College and university teacher education programs in Hawaii, Alaska, Oregon, Montana, and Utah

Laboratory Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

Program/Product Title	Computer Managed Instruction for Small/Rural Schools: Demonstration Project

Purpose To demonstrate the operational viability of computer managed instruction (CMI) for at-risk students in small/rural schools; to examine changes in student achievement, instructional delivery, and school organization and culture; and to document school district efforts to finance continued use and expansion of CMI systems.

Description The project is a unique joint venture among three small school districts, the federal government (through RBS), and a major software manufacturer. These partners are financing and installing 32 station computer learning laboratories in three small schools and supporting the staff of these schools with training and implementation help as they provide 150 minutes per week of CMI for all students. Additionally, the joint venture partners cooperate to help the schools generate funds for continued CMI operation and expansion beyond the demonstration period. RBS is documenting all installation and implementation and measuring the impact of CMI on student achievement. Documentation and impact information will appear in a guide to CMI planners. The information will be disseminated to rural, small school educators through RBS' own rural and small schools exchange (RSSX), national associations, and other networks.

Key Features

- This project, closely linked to the priorities of rural and small school educators in the Mid-Atlantic region, is a unique joint venture in which private and public sectors respond to the curriculum and learning needs of rural/small school children by introducing a technological support system for them;
- It encourages small districts to involve parents and community members in implementation and continuation decisions;
- Two areas are evaluated — the impact of CMI on student achievement and impact on instruction in the school. There is provision for dissemination, as well;
- A planning and implementation guide chronicling demonstration experiences will be developed and disseminated through RSSX, national associations, and the network of regional laboratories.

What We've Learned

Implementation is not yet complete, and thus our observations are preliminary and largely anecdotal.

- Change literature conclusions hold true with regard to administrative support and commitment, teacher readiness, linkage, and "fit" with school organizations;
- CMI helps students move through curriculum more quickly, pick up concepts earlier, think in a more organized fashion, improve their participation, and maintain a higher level of self-esteem. These results seem most obvious among special-needs students;
- Staff planning time has increased, as has administrator involvement in instructional planning;
- Funds for CMI continuation and expansion have already been secured through school district and community efforts.

Sites Eastport Elementary School, Eastport MD -- 216 students (27 percent Chapter 1)
Sacred Heart Elementary School, Palmyra, NJ -- 182 students (22 percent Chapter 1)
Wellsville Elementary School, Wellsville, PA -- 276 students (11 percentChapter 1)

Laboratory	Research for Better Schools (RBS)

Program/Product Title RSSX Dissemination of CMI Demonstration Project

Purpose

To disseminate Computer Managed Instruction (CMI) and other project information to rural and small elementary schools in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Description

RBS is committed to developing a regional rural/small schools network. The purpose of this network is to generate and exchange information about school improvement in rural and small schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland.

Key Features

Dissemination is ongoing and occurs at particular time intervals, or after a project milestone has been reached. Examples of activities are :

- o Establish CMI sites as "lighthouse" schools;
- o Plan and conduct site visits for RSSX members;
- o Plan and conduct regional conferences on CMI;
- o Report at national, state, and regional conferences;
- o Evaluate dissemination activities;
- o Disseminate R&D-based information packets.

What We've Learned

RSSX has established a vehicle for promoting and exchanging research-based information about programs and policies in school districts. It has also provided opportunities for rural partners to observe, share materials, and discuss CMI systems. The project has promoted the use of CMI through site visits and information exchange, and created ongoing linkages with rural and small school district superintendents in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Sites

Eastport Elementary School, Eastport, MD- 216 students (27 percent Chapter 1)
Sacred Heart Elementary School, Palmyra, NJ 182 students (22 percent Chapter 1)
Wellsville Elementary School, Wellsville, PA - 276 students (11 percent Chapter 1)

Laboratory Research for Better Schools (RBS)

Program/Product Title	Cooperative Arrangements for the Development of Rural Educators (CADRE)

Purpose

To establish and empower a network of training/technical assistance providers who use research-based strategies to facilitate improvements in rural, small schools of the Southwestern Region.

Description

From among existing agencies, organizations, and associations serving as training/technical assistance providers in the Southwestern Region, SEDL recruited 72 professional staff members as participants in its Training for Rural Staff Development Providers program (submitted as a separate program description). From this group, 30 worked during the 1987-88 school year as primary trainers of school personnel at 30 demonstration sites across the region; the remainder served as co-trainers or alternates. In exchange for SEDL training and technical assistance, CADRE members committed to deliver inservice training to selected rural educators and to assist SEDL in gathering relevant project information. First-year CADRE members will serve as mentor/trainers for additional members to be enlisted in SEDL's Year Two efforts. The CADRE is expected to provide an available pool of partners for continued cooperative school improvement efforts beyond the scope of SEDL's funding under the Rural, Small Schools Initiative.

Key Features

- CADRE members represent institutions of higher education, state education agencies, local education agencies, education service centers, education cooperatives, professional development centers, and other SEDL program units;
- CADRE members are trained in research-based staff development process skills and are provided research-based content materials;
- Technical assistance features regular communications through packets of follow-up information and through availability of SEDL staff for telephone consultation. Other assistance is provided by correspondence and through limited on-site activities;
- CADRE members are encouraged to use SEDL-provided training techniques and content materials with other audiences beyond SEDL's rural, small schools demonstration sites.

What We've Learned

CADRE effectively provides staff development training with a short project lead time, drawing particular strength from its use of already active training professionals having existing relationships with target sites. Evaluation of First Year activities has provided insights into ways of improving CADRE training and for gathering and using data from school sites.

Sites

More than 40 sites have received training from CADRE members.

Laboratory	Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)

Program/Product Title Promising Practices

Purpose

To produce and disseminate information about exemplary programs from rural, small schools in the Southwestern Region.

Description

A data base was created on each of approximately 1,600 rural, small schools in the Southwestern Region. Contact persons in state-level agencies, organizations, and associations, including intermediate units and institutions of higher education, were solicited for nominations of promising practices in rural school improvement. Four selection criteria were established: (1)the program must have definite indications of success; (2) the program must be replicable; (3) the program must have existed for at least one year; and (4) a contact person must be identified who will be available and accessible to interested parties. Quarterly briefing papers were produced describing featured promising practices identified through the process, with copies sent to each of the 1,600 rural, small school districts in the regional data base. A year-end document will describe and provide access information on all promising practices identified during the year.

Key Features

- As an information-gathering/dissemination activity, SEDL's Promising Practices provides both ideas for school improvement and a resource collection from which SEDL-trained staff development trainers can draw;

- The quarterly publication keeps the Promising Practices concept visible to potential users throughout the year, while the annual collection provides a more in-depth resource.

What We've Learned

SEDL's experience with its Promising Practices activity has shown that rural educators value information about good ideas from their peers. It has also shown that there are a variety of successful projects to draw upon, including many that feature collaboration between schools and outside business or other organizations. Efforts such as SEDL's Promising Practices serve not only to share these ideas, but to insure that they are documented.

Sites 1,600 rural, small school districts in the Southwestern region, plus identified agencies, associations and organizations concerned with rural education issues

Laboratory Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)

Program/Product Title Training for Rural Staff Development Providers

Purpose

To provide an effective means of delivering staff development for educators in rural, small schools.

Description

SEDL has packaged an inservice training process that enables rural educators to improve their own performance and to assist others in providing theirs. During the 1987-88 school year, almost 600 teachers and administrators in 30 rural, small districts were trained and assisted by SEDL-trained trainers from various groups — state education agencies, intermediate units, institutions of higher education, and district personnel. For this demonstration effort, the training process used content from commercially available, research-based thinking skills programs, but any content can be used effectively for staff development. The package includes descriptive and reference information about the process and considerations, as well as examples of content adapted by SEDL for thinking skills training, and describes promising practices in a variety of topic areas from rural schools in the Southwestern Region.

Key Features

- Process components: introduction/rationale/recommendations, script and line art for transparencies, site implementation materials, evaluation forms, tables, and charts, follow-up and technical assistance materials;
- Content components: sample lesson plans and activities for thinking skills, process activity log samples;
- Promising practices;
- References.

What We've Learned SEDL's first-year effort offered a stand-alone inservice delivery system that could be used by rural, small schools' training providers with any priority content. While efforts are difficult to measure at this stage, it is clear that the process can be implemented and that it is well received. Increased demand for assistance from more rural schools, accompanied by requests for continued support and technical assistance to existing sites and trainers, encourages SEDL to extend the project into Year Two of the Rural, Small Schools Initiative. When the purpose and intent of staff development are clear, administrative commitment, teacher ownership, and prioritized content appear to be the most important ingredients for success. There are clear indications, however, that staff development for rural schools will be most successful when implemented in the context of a systemic approach to school improvement within a given school or district. Thus, SEDL's challenge is to expand its ability to promote and initiate the development of such contexts on a site-by-site basis.

Sites Thirty rural, small school districts of various sizes (77 to 2,500 ADA) — six in Arkansas, two in Louisiana, eight in Oklahoma, four in New Mexico, and 10 in Texas — were selected to represent the cultural, geographic, and economic diversity of the region as demonstration sites for staff development training.

Laboratory Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)

Program/Product Title Dropout Prevention

Purpose To decrease the dropout rate in rural schools by identifying at-risk students and by developing and implementing intervention strategies responsive to the needs of those students.

Description Dropout prevention is the primary focus of SEIL's work in two sites. Educators at one site have interviewed young adults to determine why they dropped out of school. This information is being used to plan strategies for reducing the district's dropout rate. An unanticipated result of the survey is the interest demonstrated by some respondents in receiving information about returning to school, pursuing a GED, or finding employment. At the second site educators are using information about academic success and school attendance to identify at-risk ninth and 10th grade students. At-risk students and their parents are contacted and counseled. Special emphasis is placed on home visits.

Key Features

- o List of characteristics of dropouts and at-risk students;
- o Procedures for identifying potential dropouts;
- o Guidelines for training teachers in the identification of potential dropouts;
- o Guidelines for planning and monitoring intervention services for individual students.

What We've Learned

- o Procedures for using home contacts as an intervention strategy;
- o The act of surveying dropouts can result in some individuals either returning to school or seeking a GED;
- o An intervention program for at-risk students can improve school attendance;
- o Surveys and intervention strategies implemented by school staff increases their understanding of dropouts and at-risk students.

Sites Daniel High School, New Albany, MS
Bertie County Public Schools, Windsor, NC

Laboratory Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory (SEIL)

Program/Product Title Integrated Curricula

Purpose

To improve student performance by developing an awareness and understanding by teachers and students about how various subjects and learning opportunities across grade levels relate to each other.

Description

The faculty of a K-12 school is developing a coordinated plan for teaching writing at all grades levels and in all subject areas. Learning opportunities are being designed to build on previous year activities and to include writing assignments in all subjects. For example, science and mathematics teachers are preparing writing activities that they can use as part of their instructional programs. Another component of the integrated curricula program involves the development of guidelines for the use of "hands-on" instructional materials. The same sets of manipulatives will be used at several grade levels with increasing levels of sophistication.

Key Features

- Procedures for teachers to use in planning and implementing integrated curricula;
- Suggested writing assignments in all subjects and for all grade levels;
- Instructional suggestions for multiple year use of manipulatives.

What We've Learned

The first step in implementing integrated curricula activities is to assist teachers in developing and practicing coordination skills. The concept of coordination discussed in the abstract is difficult, but when given specific sets of activities it becomes rather easy to implement. Initially, some teachers have difficulty "seeing" how writing can be a "natural" activity for their subjects. This is specially true for mathematics, physical education, and some vocational educational courses. However, once teachers start to explore what can be done the process flows easily.

Sites

South Lamar School, Millport, AL

Laboratory Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory (SEIL)

Program/Product Title Language Arts/Reading Development

Purpose

To improve the language arts and reading skills of rural students through motivational techniques, computer technology, and direct involvement of parents in instruction.

Description

Three program sites have activities to improve reading and language arts skills. The focus of one site is to encourage students to develop their vocabularies through increased reading and through attention to new words. One technique is the creation of a "vocabulary worm" along the hallway of the school. The worm grows as students add new word segments. The second site has computer-based supplemental language arts programs for in-class instruction and as tutorial resources. At the third site parents learn word attack skills to allow them to help their children while sharpening their own skills.

Key Features

- Motivational techniques designed to increase the number of books being read and the number of new words being learned;
- Computer-based instructional programs;
- Parent training programs.

What We've Learned

Rural elementary students can become excited about increasing their vocabularies.

Rural parents will participate in training programs designed to teach them word attack skills.

Sites

Gretna Elementary School, Gretna, FL
Swainsboro Elementary School, Swainsboro, GA
Alcolu Elementary School, Alcolu, SC

Laboratory Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory (SEIL)

Program/Product Title Parent/Community Involvement

Purpose

To involve rural parents in the educational process by providing them information and learning opportunities. Better informed parents can be better motivators and supporters and will improve their children's chances for academic success.

Description

The greatest link between local programs is their emphasis on parent and community involvement. Activities range from developing form letters that more clearly and concisely communicate with parents to involving parents in training programs designed to make them active participants in teaching phonics. Other activities include: seminars to provide parents with basic knowledge about computers and computer usage in the school; programs on effective parenting skills; home visitation programs; newsletters; an information hot line for keeping parents informed; community school-support organizations; and classroom volunteers.

Key Features

- Procedures and materials for improving communication between the school and parents;
- Seminars and instruction for parents;
- Establishment of formal liaison with existing community organizations and the establishment of community support organizations.

What We've Learned

Economically disadvantaged rural parents are interested in their children's education. This is demonstrated by their attendance at functions that provide them information about school activities and training in how to actively participate in instruction and learning.

Sites

South Lamar School, Millport, AL
Gretna Elementary School, Gretna, FL
Swainsboro Elementary School, Swainsboro, GA
Bertie County Public Schools, Windsor, NC
Alcolu Elementary School, Alcolu, SC

Laboratory Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory (SEIL)

Program/Product Title Summary

Purpose To provide rural schools with the information, flexible resources, and technical assistance necessary to identify needs, design responses, and implement programs to better serve rural students.

Description SEIL's rural education program is based on the belief that each school can best identify its unique needs and, with appropriate technical assistance, can determine how to respond creatively to those needs. Once a rural school has responded to a need, its faculty can provide technical assistance to other rural schools that have similar needs. Strategies associated with this belief require that the rural schools be provided flexible resources, technical assistance, and the opportunity to obtain waivers from guidelines and regulations that may constrain creative responses. SEIL, with guidance from the region's state education agencies, is working with six local sites to implement the program.

Key Features

- o Flexible resources to respond to locally identified needs;
- o Technical assistance in program planning and implementation;
- o Opportunity to share locally developed expertise with rural sites which have similar needs.

What We've Learned Rural sites need assistance in "dreaming" about what could be when their "dreams" conflict with perceived constraints associated with federal, state, and local guidelines.

Mechanisms are in place for sites to obtain waivers from state guidelines, but these mechanisms are seldom, if ever, used.

Faculties of rural schools have the desire and motivation required to improve learning opportunities for their students. What they need are funds, technical assistance, materials, and other resources

Sites South Lamar School, Millport, AL; Gretna Elementary School, Gretna, FL; Swainsboro Elementary School, Swainsboro, GA; Daniel High School, New Albany, MS; Bertie County Public Schools, Windsor, NC; Alcolu Elementary School, Alcolu, SC

Laboratory Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory (SEIL)

Program/Product Title Videotaping

Purpose

To provide visual access to learning resources not readily available because of cost, geography, and time; and to improve student self-esteem and communication skills by providing them with the opportunity to participate in the production of videotape materials.

Description

Many rural students do not have ready access to learning opportunities associated with urban areas. For example, most rural areas lack museums and theaters and are located long distances from their state capitals. Many rural schools do not have access to expensive resource persons. Videotapes are being used to bring these learning opportunities to rural communities. Video technology is also being used to provide students with learning opportunities designed to increase self-esteem and communication skills by involving students in the production of videotapes about school and community activities. Plans are also being developed for the use of video technology in teacher self- and peer evaluation.

Key Features

- Procedures for obtaining, cataloging, and using videotapes;
- Guidelines for involving students in the production of videotapes;
- Guidelines for using video technology in teacher self- and peer evaluation.

What We've Learned

- Rural schools need assistance in the selection, acquisition, and utilization of video technology and in the use of copyrighted materials;
- Student self-esteem can be enhanced by involvement in the production of videotape materials;
- Guidelines need to be developed to coordinate the multiple grade level use of videotapes to maximize their instructional value.

Sites

South Lamar School, Millport, AL
Alcolu Elementary School, Alcolu, SC

Laboratory Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory (SEIL)

Excerpted from The Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988

Subpart 3—Rural Educational Opportunities

"Sec. 1456. Program Authorized

"(a) General Authority.—The Secretary shall make grants to, or enter into contracts with, institutions of higher education, private nonprofit agencies and organizations, regional educational laboratories, technical assistance centers established pursuant to section 1436(d), public agencies, State education agencies, or combinations of such agencies or institutions within particular regions of the United States, to pay all or part of the cost of operating at least 10 rural assistance programs. The Secretary may not make a grant to, or enter into a contract with, any agency, institution, organization, or combination thereof under the preceding sentence unless such agency, institution, organization, or combination thereof has extensive experience providing educational assistance to State and local educational agencies.

"(b) Functions of Regional Assistance Programs.—Each regional rural assistance program established under subsection (a) shall provide technical assistance, consultation, training, and such other assistance as will assist State educational agencies and local educational agencies in the region to improve the quality of the education provided to educationally disadvantaged children participating in programs under this chapter who reside in rural areas or attend small schools. Each such program shall give special consideration to, and report on, problems related to districts with declining enrollments and ways in which districts can combine management to provide effective programs.

"Sec. 1457. Application Priority Requirements.

"(a) In carrying out this subpart, the Secretary shall give priority to applicants which describe assistance to school districts in local educational agencies in rural areas—

"(1) with the highest concentrations of children from low-income families;

"(2) that have significant number or percentage of schools serving children from low-income families; and

"(3) in which there are a significant number of schools in which evaluations indicate lack of substantial progress toward meeting desired outcomes, no improvement, or a decline in aggregate performance by the children participating in programs under this chapter.

"(b) Applicants shall consult with State educational agencies and local educational agencies in the application process.

"Sec. 1458. Coordination, Dissemination, and Report.

"(a) Coordination.—Each program established under this subpart shall—

"(1) coordinate its activities with technical assistance centers established under section 14336(d),

"(2) coordinate its activities with the activities of local educational agencies and State educational agencies under section 1021, and

"(3) assist in identifying successful programs and practices for dissemination through existing dissemination networks and efforts.

"(b) Dissemination and Report.—(1) Each rural assistance program shall be accessible through electronic means.

"(2) Regional rural assistance programs shall submit a report to the Secretary every 2 years containing such reasonable information about its activities as the Secretary may request, but including at a minimum information on efforts to provide effective services under this chapter in rural school districts facing declining enrollments, with particular attention to issues inherent in consolidating, jointly administering, or otherwise combining the resources of 2 or more districts.

"Sec. 1459. Authorization of Appropriations.

"There are authorized to be appropriated $10,000,000 for fiscal year 1989 and such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years, 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1993.

CEDaR

The Council for Educational Development and Research (CEDaR) is a Washington-based national, nonprofit education association. Its purpose is to encourage and facilitate the improvement of education. The association's membership consists of regional educational laboratories and university-based national research centers.

David P. Crandall, executive director, Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, chairs CEDaR's Board of Trustees. E. Joseph Schneider is the association's executive director.

The work of the National Rural, Small Schools Task Force is supported in part by federal funds provided by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education. However, no federal funds were used to print this report. Nothing in it should be construed to represent either the position or policy of the Department of Education.

CEDaR

Council for Educational Development and Research
Suite 305
1201-16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20036
202/223-1593